

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHINGTON PRIORITY 6360

INFO AMEMBASSY SEOUL

USLO PEKING PRIORITY

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

USLO PEKING PASS TO SECRETARY'S PARTY

EO 11652: NA

TAGS: PINT JA

SUBJ: PUBLIC REACTION TO TANAKA'S RESIGNATION ANNOUNCEMENT

SUMMARY: TANAKA'S RESIGNATION WAS GREETED BY THE PRESS AND THE PUBLIC AS A NATURAL CONSEQUENCE OF HIS LOSS OF POWER. THE PRESS NOTED WITH CONCERN THAT IN THE IMMEDIATE PROCESS OF CHOOSING A SUCCESSOR, THE LDP IS IGNORING THE NEED FOR REFORM AND IS CARRYING ON FACTIONAL POLITICS AS USUAL. THE OPPOSITION PARTIES ARE PLANNING TO KEEP THE TANAKA ISSUE ALIVE TO WEAKEN THE LDP. THE MAN-IN-THE-STREET IS GENERALLY APATHETIC. SOME CONCEDE, HOWEVER, THAT TANAKA HAS BEEN AN ENERGETIC LEADER, AND WONDER WHETHER ANOTHER LEADER CAPABLE OF MEETING THE NATION'S NEEDS CAN BE FOUND. END SUMMARY.

1. ON PRIME MINISTER TANAKA'S RESIGNATION ANNOUNCEMENT ON NOV 26 WAS GENERALLY GREETED BY THE PRESS

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AND GENERAL PUBLIC AS A NATURAL CONSEQUENCE OF HIS

LOSS OF POWER. THE PRESS USED THE OCCASION TO REVIEW AND EVALUATE THE TWO AND A HALF YEARS OF TANAKA'S RULE, GIVING HIM GOOD MARKS IN THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS SPHERE BUT BLAMING HIM FOR POOR HANDLING OF DOMESTIC PROBLEMS. IT WAS NOTED WITH APPROVAL BY SOME OF TANAKA'S SEVEREST CRITICS THAT HE HAD SUSPENDED ANNOUNCEMENT OF HIS RESIGNATION UNTIL PRESIDENT FORD'S RETURN TO WASHINGTON OUT OF COURTESY TO THE PRESIDENT.

2. AS THE LDP IN THE WAKE OF TANAKA'S ANNOUNCEMENT STEPPED UP FACTIONAL MANEUVERING FOR CONTROL OF THE PARTY AND THE PREMIERSHIP, THE PRESS GAVE CONSIDERABLE COVERAGE TO ALL ASPECTS OF THESE MOVES. EDITORIALY, THE PRESS HAS ALMOST UNANIMOUSLY TAKEN THE LDP TO TASK FOR IGNORING THE LESSONS TO BE DRAWN FROM THE TANAKA DEBACLE. HIS TROUBLES WERE DESCRIBED AS STEMMING FIRST OF ALL FROM HIS PERSONAL FAILINGS, AND IT WAS STRESSED THAT HE OWES A FULL ACCOUNTING TO THE NATION AS HE HAS AGAIN PROMISED TO DO IN HIS RESIGNATION STATEMENT. PRESS EDITORIALS ALSO NOTED THAT TANAKA'S PROBLEMS REPRESENT A DEEPER AND MORE PERVASIVE CORRUPTION--"THE TIP OF AN ICEBERG"--WITHIN THE LDP, ITS FACTIONAL POLITICS, AND TIE-UPS WITH BIG BUSINESS.

3. VIRTUALLY ALL NEWSPAPERS HAVE CALLED UPON THE LDP TO GRASP THIS "GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY FOR REFORM" TO MAKE STRUCTURAL CHANGES, AS RECENTLY RECOMMENDED BY A STUDY GROUP HEADED BY LDP VICE PRESIDENT SHIINA. BUT THE EDITORIALS NOTED WITH CONCERN THAT IN THE IMMEDIATE VUUIT OF POWER, ALL ELEMENTS OF THE PARTY ARE CARRYING ON BUSINESS AS USUAL. UNLESS THIS IS CHANGED IMMEDIATELY, THE EDITORIALS ASSERTED, THE PARTY MAY REPEAT ITS MISTAKE OF PRODUCING LEADERS THAT MAY BE TEMPTED TO GO "BEYOND THE BOUNDS OF PERMISSIVENESS" TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE PARTY AND THE NATION.

4. THE OPPOSITION PARTIES STATED THAT THE CASE AGAINST TANAKA IS BY NO MEANS CLOSED WITH HIS RESIGNATION, AND THAT THEY INTEND TO PURSUE THE TRUTH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IN THE PRESS AND THE DIET. THE JCP, FOR EXAMPLE, DEVOTED TWO AND A HALF PAGES TO A TEN-POINT "INDICTMENT" AGAINST TANAKA. MOREOVER, THE OPPOSITION PARTIES AS EXPECTED ECHOED THE PRESS THEME THAT TANAKA'S TROUBLES ARE PART AND PARCEL OF CORRUPTION PERVADING THE LDP. THE PARTY HAS LOST ITS MANDATE, THEREFORE POWER SHOULD BE TRANSFERRED TO A TRANSITIONAL COALITION GOVERNMENT OF OPPOSITION PARTIES PENDING THE

HOLDING OF GENERAL ELECTIONS. (WHILE TAKING THIS PUBLIC STAND, REPORTERS AND KOMEITO DIET MEMBERS HAVE PRIVATELY TOLD EMBOFF THAT RELINQUISHMENT OF POWER BY THE LDP WOULD BE THE LAST THING THAT THE REFORMIST PARTIES WOULD WANT BECAUSE OF THEIR COMPLETE INABILITY TO FORM A GOVERNMENT AT THIS TIME.)

5. REACTIONS FROM THE MAN-IN-THE-STREET, ACCORDING TO TELEVISION AND PRESS INTERVIEWS, SHOW MARKED APATHY TOWARD TANAKA'S RESIGNATION AND CHOICE OF A SUCCESSOR, AND OVERWHELMING PREOCCUPATION WITH THE BREAD-AND- BUTTER ISSUES OF INFLATION AND SIGNES OF RECESSION. SOME WHO WERE INTERVIEWED EXPRESSED DISAPPOINTMENT THAT TANAKA, A "COMMONER", HAD FAILED, BUT NOTED THAT HE WAS AFTER ALL AN INNOVATOR AND A DOER. WITH LITTLE ATTEMPT TO HIDE THEIR ANXIETY OVER ECONOMIC TRENDS, THEY NOTED THAT THE NATION WOULD BE HARD PUT TO FIND ANOTHER MAN CAPABLE OF MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE TIMES.
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